

Remarks to the United Nations General Assembly in New York City
September 19, 2023

Mr. President, Mr. Secretary-General, and my fellow leaders: About a week ago I stood on the other side of the world in Vietnam on soil once bloody with war. And I met a small group of veterans, Americans and Vietnamese, who—and I watched an exchange of personal artifacts from that war: identification cards and a diary. It was deeply moving to see the reaction of the Vietnamese and American soldiers, a culmination of 50 years of hard work on both sides to address the painful legacies of war and to choose—to choose—to work together toward peace and a better future.

Nothing about that journey was inevitable. For decades, it would have been unthinkable for an American President to stand in Hanoi alongside a Vietnamese leader and announce a mutual commitment to the highest level of countries' partnership. But it's a powerful reminder that our history need not dictate our future.

With a concerted leadership and careful effort, adversaries can become partners, overwhelming challenges can be resolved, and deep wounds can heal. So let us never forget that. When we choose to stand together and recognize the common hopes that bind all humanity, we hold our hands the power—in that power to bend that arc of history.

My fellow leaders, we gather once more at an inflection point in world history with the eyes of the world upon all of you—all of us.

As President of the United States, I understand the duty my country has to lead in this critical moment; to work with countries in every region linking them in common cause; to join together with partners who share a common vision of the future of the world, where our children do not go hungry and everyone has access quality health care, where workers are empowered and our environment is protected, where entrepreneurs and innovators everywhere can access opportunity everywhere, where conflicts are resolved peacefully and countries can chart their own course.

The United States seeks a more secure, more prosperous, more equitable world for all people because we know our future is bound to yours. Let me repeat that again: We know our future is bound to yours. And no nation can meet the challenges of today alone.

The generations who precede us—preceded us organized this body, the United Nations, and built international financial institutions and multilateral and regional bodies to help take on the challenges of their time. It isn't always perfect—it wasn't always perfect, but working together, the world made some remarkable and undeniable progress that improved the lives of all people.

We avoided the renewal of global conflict while lifting more than 1 billion people—1 billion people—out of extreme poverty. We, together, expanded access to education for millions of children. We saved tens of millions of lives that would have otherwise been lost to preventable and treatable diseases like measles, malaria, tuberculosis. HIV/AIDS infections and deaths plummeted in no small part because of PEPFAR's work in more than 55 countries, saving more than 25 million lives.

It's a profound testament to what we can achieve when we act together when we take on tough challenges and an admonition for us to urgently accelerate our progress so that no one is left behind, because too many people are being left behind. The institutions we built together at

the end of the Second World War are an enduring bedrock of our progress, and the United States is committed to sustaining them. And this year, we're proud to rejoin UNESCO.

But we also recognize that to meet the new challenges of our decades-old institutions and approaches, they must be updated to keep pace [pace; White House correction] with the world. We have to bring in more leadership and capability that exists everywhere, especially from regions that have not always been fully included. We have to grapple with the challenges that are more connected and more complex. And we have to make sure we're delivering for people everywhere, not just somewhere. Everywhere.

Simply put, the 21st century—21st-century results are badly needed—are needed to move us along. That starts with the United Nations—starts right here in this room. In my address to this body last year, I announced the United States would support expanding the Security Council, increasing the number of permanent and nonpermanent members.

The United States has undertaken serious consultation with many member states. And we'll continue to do our part to push more reform efforts forward, look for points of common ground, and make progress in the year ahead.

We need to be able to break the gridlock that too often stymies progress and blocks consensus on the Council. We need more voices and more perspectives at the table.

The United Nations must continue to preserve peace, prevent conflict, and alleviate human suffering. And we embrace nations stepping up to lead in new ways and to seek new breakthroughs on hard issues.

For example, on Haiti, the Caribbean Community is facilitating a dialogue among Haitian society. I think President Ruto of Kenya's—I thank him for his willingness to serve as the lead nation of a U.N.-backed security support mission. I call on the Security Council to authorize this mission now. The people of Haiti cannot wait much longer.

The United States is working across the board to make global institutions more responsive, more effective, and more inclusive.

For example, we've taken significant steps to reform and scale up the World Bank, expanding its financing to low- and middle-income countries so it can help boost progress toward meeting the sustainable development goals and better address interconnected challenges like climate change and fragility. Under the new President of the World Bank, change is already taking root.

Last month, I asked the United States Congress for additional funds to expand World Bank financing by \$25 billion. And at the G-20, we rallied the major economies of the world to mobilize even more funding. Collectively, we can deliver a transformational boost to World Bank lending.

And because the multilateral development banks are among the best tools we have for modernizing—mobilizing transparent, high-quality investment in developing countries, reforming these institutions can be a game-changer.

Similarly, we've proposed making sure developing countries have a strong voice and representation at the International Monetary Fund.

We're going to continue our efforts to reform the World Trade Organization and preserve competition, openness, transparency, and the rule of law, while, at the same time, equipping it to better tackle modern-day imperatives, like driving the clean-energy transition, protecting workers, promoting inclusive and sustainable growth.

And this month, we strengthened the G-20 as a vital forum, welcoming the African Union as a permanent member.

But upgrading and strengthening our institutions, that's only half of the picture. We must also forge new partnerships, confront new challenges. Emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, hold both enormous potential and enormous peril. We need to be sure they are used as tools of opportunity, not as weapons of oppression.

Together with leaders around the world, the United States is working to strengthen rules and policies so AI technologies are safe before they are released to the public; to make sure we govern this technology, not the other way around, having it govern us.

And I'm committed to working through this institution and other international bodies and directly with leaders around the world, including our competitors, to ensure we harness the power of AI—artificial intelligence for good, while protecting our citizens from its most profound risks.

It's going to take all of us. I've been working at this for a while, as many of you have. It's going to take all of us to get this right.

In every region of the world, the United States is mobilizing strong alliances, versatile partnerships, common purpose, collective action to bring new approaches to our shared challenges.

Here in the Western Hemisphere, we united 21 nations in support of the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection, launching a regionwide approach to a regionwide challenge to better uphold laws and protect the rights of migrants.

In the Indo-Pacific, we've elevated our Quad partnership with India, Japan, and Australia to deliver concrete progress for the people of the region on everything from vaccines to maritime security.

Just yesterday, after 2 [years of; White House correction] consultations and diplomacy, the United States brought together dozens of nations across four continents to establish a new Partnership for Atlantic Cooperation so that the coastal Atlantic countries can better cooperate on science, technology, environmental protection, and sustainable economic development.

We've brought together nearly 100 countries in a global coalition to counter fentanyl and synthetic drugs to reduce the human cost of this affliction. And it is real.

And as the nature of the terrorist threats evolve and the geography expands to new places, we're working with our partners to bring capabilities to bear to disrupt plotting, degrade networks, and protect all of our people.

Additionally, we convened the Summit for Democracy to strengthen democratic institutions, root out corruption, and reject political violence. And in this moment where democratically-elected governments have been toppled in quick succession in West and Central Africa, we're reminded that this work is as urgent and important as ever.

We stand with the African Union and ECOWAS and other regional bodies to support constitutional rule. We will not retreat from the values that make us strong. We will defend democracy, our best tool to meet the challenges we face around the world. And we're working to show how democracy can deliver in ways that matter to people's lives.

The Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment addresses the enormous need and opportunity for infrastructure investment in low- and middle-income countries, particularly in Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia.

Through strategic, targeted public investments, we can unlock enormous amounts of private-sector financing. The G-7 has pledged to work with parties to collectively mobilize \$600 billion in infrastructure financing by 2027. The United States has already mobilized more than \$30 billion to date.

We're creating a race to the top with projects that have high standards for workers, the environment, and intellectual property, while avoiding the trap of unsustainable debt.

We're focusing on economic corridors that will maximize the impact of our collective investment and deliver consequential results across multiple countries and multiple sectors. For example, the Lobito Corridor will extend across Africa from the western port of Angola to the D.R.C. to Zambia, boosting regional connectivity and strengthening commerce and food security in Africa.

Similarly, the groundbreaking effort we announced at the G-20 connect India—to connect India to Europe through the U.A.E., Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Israel will spur opportunities and investment across two continents.

This is part of our effort to build a more sustainable, integrated Middle East. It demonstrates how Israel's greater normalization and economic connection with its neighbors is delivering positive and practical impacts even as we continue to work tirelessly to support a just and lasting peace between Israelis—the Israelis and Palestinians, two states for two people.

Now, let me be clear: None of these partnerships are about containing any country, they're about a positive vision for our shared future.

When it comes to China, I want to be clear and consistent. We seek to responsibly manage the competition between our countries so it does not tip into conflict. I've said, "We are for derisking, not decoupling with China."

We will push back on aggression and intimidation and defend the rules of the road, from freedom of navigation to overflight to a level economic playing field that have helped safeguard security and prosperity for decades. But we also stand ready to work together with China on issues where progress hinges on our common efforts.

Nowhere is that more critical than accelerating the climate crisis—than the accelerating climate crisis. We see it everywhere: record-breaking heatwaves in the United States and China; wildfires ravaging North America and Southern Europe; a fifth year of drought in the Horn of Africa; tragic, tragic flooding in Libya—my heart goes out to the people of Libya—that's killed thousands—thousands—of people.

Together, these snapshots tell an urgent story of what awaits us if we fail to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and begin to climate-proof the world.

For one day—for one day [from day one; White House correction], my administration, the United States, has treated this crisis as an existential threat from the moment we took office not only for us, but for all of humanity.

Last year, I signed into law in the United States the largest investment ever, anywhere in the history of the world to combat the climate crisis and help move the global economy toward a clean energy future. We're also working with the Congress to quadruple our climate financing to help developing countries reach their climate goals and adapt to climate impacts.

And this year, the world is on track to meet the climate fund—the climate finance pledge that—made under the Paris Agreement: \$100 billion to raise collectively. But we need more investment from the public and private sector alike, especially in places that have contributed so

little to global emissions, but face some of the worst effects of climate change, like the Pacific Islands.

The United States is working directly with the Pacific Islands Forum to help these nations adapt and build resilience to the climate impact, even as we lead the effort to build innovative, new partnerships that attack the global challenges from all sides.

From the First Movers Coalition, which is mobilizing billions of private-sector community—in the private-sector commitments to creating a market demand for green products in carbon-intense sectors like concrete, shipping, aviation, and trucking; to the Agriculture Innovation Mission for Climate, which is bringing farmers into the climate solution and making our food supply more resilient to climate shocks; and the Global Methane Pledge, now endorsed by more than 150 countries, which expands our focus beyond our carbon emission targets to reduce the potential greenhouse gases in our atmosphere by 30 percent in this decade: It's all within our capacity.

We need to bring the same commitment and urgency and ambition as we work together to meet the sustainable development goals of 2030. These goals were adopted at the United Nations in 2015 as a roadmap for improving lives around the world.

But the hard truth is: For decades of progress, the world has lost ground these past years in the wake of COVID–19, conflicts, and other crises. The United States is committing to doing its part to get us back on track.

All told, in the first 2 years of my administration, the United States has invested more than \$100 billion to drive development progress in bolstering food security, expanding access to education worldwide, strengthening health care systems, and fighting disease. And we've helped mobilize billions more in the private-sector investments.

But to accelerate our forward progress on the sustainable development goals, we all have to do more. We need to build new partnerships that change the way we tackle this challenge to unlock trillions of additional financing for development, drawing on all sources. We need to fill the gaps and address the failures of our existing system exposed by the pandemic.

We need to ensure that women and girls benefit fully from our progress.

We must also do more to grapple with the debt that holds back so many low- and middle-income countries. When nations are forced to service unsustainable debt payments over the needs of their own people, it makes it harder for them to invest in their own futures.

And as we work together to recover from global shocks, the United States will also continue to be the largest single-community donor—country donor of humanitarian assistance at this moment of unparalleled need in the world.

Folks, cooperation, partnership—these are the keys to progress on the challenges that affect us all and the baseline for responsible global leadership.

We don't need to agree on everything to keep moving forward on issues like arms control, a cornerstone of international security. After more than 50 years of progress under the Non-Proliferation Treaty, Russia is shredding longstanding arms control agreements, including announcing the suspension of New START and withdrawing from the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty.

I view it as irresponsible, and it makes the entire world less safe. The United States is going to continue to pursue good-faith efforts to reduce the threat of weapons of mass destruction and lead by example, no matter what else is happening in the world.

This year, we've safely destroyed at least—the last chemical munitions in the U.S. stockpile, fulfilling our commitment toward a world free of chemical weapons.

And we condemn the D.P.R.K.'s continued violations of U.N. Security Council Resolutions, but we are committed to diplomacy that would bring about the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

And we're working with our partners to address Iran's destabilizing activities that threaten regional and global security and remain steadfast in our commitment that Iran must never acquire a nuclear weapon.

Now, even as we evolve our institutions and drive creative new partnerships, let me be clear: Certain principles of our international system are sacrosanct. Sovereignty, territorial integrity, human rights—these are the core tenets of the U.N. Charter, the pillars of peaceful relations among nations, without which we cannot achieve any of our goals. That has not changed, and that must not change.

Yet, for the second year in a row, this gathering dedicated to peaceful resolution of conflicts is darkened by the shadow of war, an illegal war of conquest, brought without provocation by Russia against its neighbor, Ukraine.

Like every nation in the world, the United States wants this war to end. No nation wants this war to end more than Ukraine. And we strongly support Ukraine in its efforts to bring about a diplomatic resolution that delivers just and lasting peace.

But Russia alone—Russia alone—bears responsibility for this war. Russia alone has the power to end this war immediately. And it's Russia alone that stands in the way of peace, because the—Russia's price for peace is Ukraine's capitulation, Ukraine's territory, and Ukraine's children.

Russia believes that the world will grow weary and allow it to brutalize Ukraine without consequence. But I ask you this: If we abandon the core principles of the United States [U.N. Charter; White House correction] to appease an aggressor, can any member state in this body feel confident that they are protected? If we allow Ukraine to be carved up, is the independence of any nation secure?

I'd respectfully suggest the answer is no. We have to stand up to this naked aggression today and deter other would-be aggressors tomorrow. That's why the United States, together with our allies and partners around the world, will continue to stand with the brave people of Ukraine as they defend their sovereignty and territorial integrity and their freedom.

It's not only an investment in Ukraine's future, but in the future of every country that seeks a world governed by basic rules that apply equally to all nations and uphold the rights of every nation, no matter how big or small: sovereignty, territorial integrity. They are the fixed foundations of this noble body, and universal human rights is its North Star. We cannot sacrifice either.

Seventy-five years ago, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights captured a remarkable act of collective hope—and I say that again—collective hope—drafted by a committee representing different regions, faiths, philosophies, and adopted by the entire General Assembly. The rights contained in the declaration are elemental and enduring.

And while we still struggle to uphold equal and inalienable rights of all, they remain ever steady and ever true. We cannot turn away from abuses, whether in Xinjiang, Tehran, Darfur, or anywhere else.

We have to continue working to ensure that women and girls enjoy equal rights and equal participation in their societies; that Indigenous groups, racial, ethnic, religious minorities, people

with disabilities do not have their potential stifled by systemic discrimination; that the LGBTQI+ people are not prosecuted or targeted with violence because of who they are.

These rights are part of our shared humanity. They're absent—when they're absent anywhere, their loss is felt everywhere. They are essential to the advancement of human progress that brings us together.

My fellow leaders, let me close with this. At this inflection point in history, we're going to be judged by whether or not we live up to the promises we have made to ourselves, to each other, to the most vulnerable, and to all those who will inherit the world we create, because that's what we're doing.

Will we find within ourselves the courage to do what must be done to preserve the planet, to protect human dignity, to provide opportunity for people everywhere, and to defend the tenets of the United Nations? There can only be one answer to that question: We must, and we will.

The road ahead is long and difficult, but if we preserve—persevere and prevail, if we keep the faith in ourselves and show what's possible. Let's do this work together. Let's deliver progress for everyone. Let's bend the arc of history for the good of the world because it's within our power to do it.

Thank you for listening. You're kind.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:17 a.m. at United Nations Headquarters. In his remarks, he referred to President of the 78th Session of the General Assembly Dennis Francis and Secretary-General António Manuel de Oliveira Guterres of the United Nations; General Secretary Nguyễn Phú Trọng of Vietnam; and President Ajay Banga of the World Bank.

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